

NE surveys raise some questions



By KWAN JIN YAO

THE report "Most youths will defend S'pore" (*my paper*, Nov 3) presents a set of facts and figures from a National Education (NE) survey conducted by the Ministry of Education (MOE), and shared by Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence Ng Eng Hen at the Connexion Seminar in Yishun Junior College.

The key findings of the survey paint a rosy picture of young Singaporeans who have a positive perception of the state of the country, and the results appear to **corroborate** the success of the NE programmes.

However, Dr Ng's reference to the survey raises some questions:

Was it a single survey or a collection of studies on people spread across different age groups?

It was reported that the survey was administered to pupils and students in Primary 4 and 6, Secondary 2 and 4, and the second year of junior college.

But by lumping together an assortment of surveys with varying **sample populations**, readers are presented with some potentially unconvincing results.

For instance, were the pre-tertiary students asked whether they were proud to defend Singapore? Would their sentiments be more accurate if they had served national service?

Where can the public find more information about the 2008 and 2010 NE surveys?

According to reports, the NE surveys were conducted in 2008 and this year, but a simple search on MOE's website reveals no reference or official release of the surveys' findings.

Many Singaporeans would like to understand the **methodologies** of the studies.

How were the questions presented, and how did the researchers go about conducting the surveys?

Were they done immediately after an NE presentation, or under the strict supervision of teachers?

More information on the 2008 survey should also be released.

To what extent can the survey findings be attributed to the NE programmes?

Did the researchers consider the extent to which the survey's positive results can be attributed directly to the success of the NE programmes?

For example, by comparing the results of sample groups from different institutions, we can determine whether NE plays a pivotal role in fostering **national consciousness**.

Such knowledge would be helpful for directing future NE efforts, and evaluating whether current materials and presentations are too antiquated or pedantic.

Were qualitative approaches, such as interviews and focus-group discussions, used in the NE survey? Numbers can tell only so much.

It would also be beneficial for MOE to selectively interview students or student-based groups to garner more holistic responses on NE, and thus gain further insight into the issues of commitment and patriotism.

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HELPDESK 我的字典

Corroborate: 证实 zhèng shí

Sample populations: 抽样人口 chōu yàng rén kǒu

Methodologies: 方法学 fāng fǎ xué

National consciousness: 国民意识 guó mín yì shí

Punggol Park badly needs cleaning up

I REFER to the report, "PM opens Sengkang Floating Wetland" (*my paper*, Nov 8).

It is heartening to note that PUB is making the effort to cultivate an ecosystem of plants and wildlife. This will enhance the natural surroundings of the HDB estate.

However, I hope that the wetland will be diligently maintained. Enforcement against the dumping of aquatic animals or litter should also be carried out.

For example, Punggol Park's wetland and pond used to be a serene place to view aquatic flora and fauna, and other creatures like butterflies and birds.

Unfortunately, the pond has become murky and smelly, choked with unsightly litter. It looks more like an abandoned wasteland.

I hope the authorities managing Punggol Park can clean up the weeds there and spruce up the surroundings to attract more visitors.

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